

Message Text

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ACTION VO-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CVIS, TW, SEDU, US, PFOR

SUBJECT: DEFICIENCIES IN FORM I-20 (CERTIFICATE OF
ELIGIBILITY FOR NONIMMIGRANT "F-1" STUDENT STATUS)

REF : TAIPEI 565

SUMMARY: A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF THE I-20'S SUBMITTED TO EMBASSY TAIPEI BY F-1 NIV APPLICANTS HAVE BEEN IMPROPERLY FILLED OUT BY THE ISSUING US INSTITUTIONS. MAJOR DEFICIENCIES INVOLVE ESTIMATES OF EXPENSES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, BUT OTHER PROBLEMS EXIST FOR EVERY ITEM OF INFORMATION LISTED ON THE I-20. END SUMMARY.

1. THE MOST SERIOUS DEFICIENCY ON FORM I-20 IS ITEM 5 (TUITION AND LIVING EXPENSES) WHICH OFTEN FAILS TO MENTION SUMMERTIME LIVING EXPENSES AND STATES ABSURDLY LOW COST OF LIVING ESTIMATES. APPROXIMATELY ONE-QUARTER OF THE I-20'S SEEN HERE QUOTE FULL-YEAR LIVING EXPENSES ESTIMATES (ROOM, BOARD, BOOKS AND ALL INCIDENTAL EXPENSES) OF UNDER \$1600 PER YEAR, WITH SOME SCHOOLS CLAIMING COSTS AS LOW AS \$1000. CURRENCY CONTROL LAWS OF THE GROC PROHIBIT STUDENTS FROM EXPORTING FUNDS IN EXCESS OF THE AMOUNT NEEDED FOR THEIR FIRST YEAR'S STUDY, SO THAT LOW LIVING COSTS ESTIMATES ON FORMS I-20 MIGHT BE EXPECTED DIRECTLY TO CAUSE SOME STUDENTS EVENTUALLY TO SEEK ILLEGAL EMPLOYMENT IN THE US TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES. ADDITIONALLY, MANY STUDENTS SEEN HERE CLAIM TO HAVE MADE FINAL SELECTION OF A UNIVERSITY ON THE BASIS OF COSTS LISTED ON I-20'S AND ARE MISLED INTO

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BELIEVING THAT THEY CAN SUBSIST ON UNREALISTICALLY LOW

AMOUNTS OF MONEY AT SOME SCHOOLS IN THE US. ADDITIONALLY, MANY UNIVERSITIES FAIL TO CLARIFY THE DETAILS OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OFFERED TO STUDENTS, AND DO NOT STATE CLEARLY ON THE I-20 WHETHER AN ASSISTANTSHIP INCLUDES TUITION WAIVER, HOW MUCH OF A MONTHLY STIPEND WILL BE WITHHELD FOR TAXES AND OTHER FEES, OR THE EXACT DURATION AND RENEWABILITY OF A GRANT OR LOAN.

2. ITEM 4 ON THE FORM I-20 CONCERNS THE STUDENT'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, AND IS ONLY RARELY FILLED OUT PROPERLY BY THE ISSUING UNIVERSITY. A SCHOOL SHOULD CLEARLY STATE IN THIS SECTION WHETHER THE STUDENT IS EXPECTED TO BE PREPARED FOR IMMEDIATE MATRICULATION IN HIS MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY, OR IF HE MAY TAKE ENGLISH CLASSES CONCURRENTLY WITH HIS REGULAR COURSES IN HIS FIRST TERM. UNLESS A SCHOOL CLEARLY INDICATES THAT IT ANTICIPATES HAVING TO CATER TO INITIAL ENGLISH PROBLEMS, THE CONSULAR OFFICER WILL USUALLY ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ASSURING THAT THE STUDENT IS FAIRLY CONVERSANT IN ENGLISH IN HIS INTENDED FIELD OF STUDY. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WITH THE LARGE NUMBER OF CHINESE STUDENTS WHO ARE OFFERED GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS; IF THE SCHOOL IS PREPARED TO RECEIVE A TEACHING ASSISTANT WHO MAY BE UNABLE TO TEACH OR WRITE EFFECTIVELY IN ENGLISH FOR SOME MONTHS AFTER HIS INITIAL ARRIVAL IN THE US, IT SHOULD SO STATE ON THE I-20. IT SHOULD BE ASSUMED THAT TOEFL (TEST OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE) RESULTS ARE NOT ALWAYS ACCURATE INDICATORS OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY, ESPECIALLY SINCE TESTS GIVEN BEFORE 1976 OFTEN INVOLVED CONSIDERABLE FRAUD. ITEM 4 ON THE FORM I-20 ALLOWS THE ISSUING SCHOOL AN OPPORTUNITY TO INFORM THE EXAMINING CONSULAR OFFICER ABOUT ITS ACTUAL ENGLISH PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR A PARTICULAR STUDENT, SO THAT THE CONSUL HIMSELF CAN CONVERSE WITH THE STUDENT AND JUDGE HIS ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITIES ON BEHALF OF THE SCHOOL.

3. OTHER DEFICIENCIES FREQUENTLY SEEN IN REVIEWING SUBMITTED FORMS I-20: A) ACCOMPANYING LETTERS OR LETTERS SENT DIRECTLY TO STUDENTS BY DEPARTMENTS WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY OFTEN CONTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT FINANCES THAT UNCLASSIFIED

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IS DIRECTLY CONTRADICTORY TO INFORMATION GIVEN ON THE I-20. B) MANY I-20'S DO NOT LIST THE STUDENT'S INTENDED FIELD OF STUDY, OR LIST ONLY THE DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY TO WHICH THE STUDENT WILL BE ASSIGNED. C) A SINGLE UNIVERSITY MAY SEND I-20'S TO SEVERAL DIFFERENT STUDENTS WHICH GIVE ENTIRELY DIFFERENT COST-OF-LIVING ESTIMATES, WITH VARIATIONS AS GREAT AS 100 PERCENT. D) SOME SCHOOLS RECEIVE LETTERS FROM STUDENTS WHO EXPRESS A DESIRE TO LIVE

WITH FRIENDS OR RELATIVES IN THE US, AND ACCORDINGLY
SUBMIT EXTREMELY LOW ESTIMATES OF LIVING EXPENSES IN THE
BELIEF THAT THE STUDENT'S ROOM AND BOARD HAVE ALREADY
BEEN PROVIDED.

4. THE AFOREMENTIONED DEFICIENCIES IN I-20'S CURRENTLY
BEING SUBMITTED ARE SO COMMON THAT IT WOULD BE IMPRACTICAL
AT PRESENT TO REQUIRE ALL STUDENTS SUBMITTING CLEARLY
ERRONEOUS FORMS TO RETURN THEM TO THE ISSUING INSTITUTIONS
FOR AMENDMENT OR CORRECTION. CONSULAR OFFICERS HERE WILL
CONTINUE TO ACCEPT I-20'S THAT CAN BE REASONABLY INTERPRETED
WITH SOME PERUSAL OF ACCOMPANYING LETTERS FROM SCHOOLS,
BUT IT WOULD BE ADVISABLE TO SEND CLARIFYING INSTRUCTIONS
TO ALL INSTITUTIONS APPROVED BY INS FOR ATTENDANCE BY
NONIMMIGRANT STUDENTS.

5. ACTION REQUESTED:
IF THE DEPARTMENT PERCEIVES NO OBJECTION, WE WOULD APPRECIATE
YOUR ADVISING THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS
AFFAIRS, 1860 19TH STREET N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20009,
OF THE FOREGOING.
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Margaret P. Grafeld
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